

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 06540 191844Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3228
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 6540

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR PDEV IS PEPR US
SUBJ: MINISTRY OF DEFENSE WEST BANK SETTLEMENT PROPOSAL

REF.: STATE 127461

1. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND THE JEWISH AGENCY SETTLEMENT DEPARTMENT, THIS IS BY NO MEANS A NEW PROPOSAL. THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AFFAIRS BRIEFLY DISCUSSED ON FEB 21 AND 26 IN SECRET SESSION AN IDEA ADVANCED BY WEIZMAN TO ESTABLISH SIX URBAN AREAS ON THE WEST BANK AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO SHARON'S PROPOSAL TO SET UP A SETTLEMENT "ON EVERY HILL." SINCE THEN SHARON HAS CONSTANTLY DEMANDED THAT WEIZMAN PRESENT A CONCRETE PROPOSAL BEFORE THE JOINT MINISTERIAL-WZO COMMITTEE ON SETTLEMENT. ON MAY 17, GENERAL AVRAHAM TAMIR FINALLY BRIEFED SHARON AND THE COMMITTEE ON THE SETTLEMENT PROGRAM FOR THE WEST BANK PREPARED BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE'S PLANNING DIVISION.

2. STORIES ABOUT THAT BRIEFING PREDICTABLY APPEARED IN THE PRESS ON MAY 18. THE PRESS REPORTED THAT THE MINISTRY
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OF DEFENSE PROPOSAL IS FOR THE EVENTUAL CONSTRUCTION OF SIX URBAN CENTERS (WITH A TOTAL POPULATION OF 38,000 FAMILIES IN THE FINAL STAGE) ON THE WEST BANK. THE TOWNS WOULD BE SET UP ON GOVERNMENT LAND, WITHOUT THE NEED FOR ANY EXPROPRIATIONS, AT THE FOLLOWING EXISTING SETTLEMENT SITES:

-- HARIS, PRESENTLY A MILITARY OUTPOST UNDERGOING GROUND-WORK FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSING FOR PERMANENT SETTLERS. ACCORDING TO THE PLAN, 14,000 FAMILIES WOULD BE SETTLED AT THIS SITE IN THE FINAL STAGE.

-- MA'ALE ADUMIM, WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN APPROVED AS AN URBAN SETTLEMENT, WOULD HAVE 7,000 FAMILIES.

-- GIVON, CURRENTLY A MILITARY OUTPOST HOUSING A GUSH EMUNIM NUCLEUS, WOULD HAVE 5,000 FAMILIES.

-- KARNEI SHOMRON, ANOTHER MILITARY OUTPOST WITH A GUSH EMUNIM NUCLEUS, WOULD HAVE 2,000 FAMILIES.

-- NABI SALAH, ALSO A MILITARY OUTPOST WITH A GUSH EMUNIM NUCLEUS, WOULD HAVE 2,000 FAMILIES.

--EFRAT, THE EXISTING URBAN CENTER OF THE ETZION BLOC, WOULD HAVE 8,000 FAMILIES.

IN ITS FIRST STAGE, WHICH SHOULD LAST THREE OR FOUR YEARS, A TOTAL OF 2,000 HOUSING UNITS WILL BE CONSTRUCTED. ACCORDING TO HAARETZ (SCHIFF AND LITANI), KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCES STATE THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSAL WOULD BE SLOW DUE TO BUDGETARY LIMITATIONS. SINCE THE PROPOSAL MENTIONS ONLY THESE SITES, IT CAN BE INTERPRETED TO MEAN
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THAT NO MORE SMALL SETTLEMENTS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED MEANWHILE.

3. OUR SOURCES TELL US THAT NO FINAL DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN BY EITHER THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON SECURITY OR THE JOINT MINISTERIAL "WZO SETTLEMENT COMMITTEE ON THE PROPOSAL.

4. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THAT THIS PROPOSAL, DRAWN UP AT WEIZMAN'S REQUEST, HAD AS MUCH TO DO WITH DOMESTIC ISRAELI POLITICS AS WITH SETTLEMENTS. WEIZMAN HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE DOVISH IMAGE HE HAS BEEN ACQUIRING OF LATE AND THE PROPOSAL PROBABLY WAS INTENDED TO PROTECT HIS EXPOSED FLANK IN HERUT AND THE CABINET. MOREOVER, HE HAS LONG HAD PROBLEMS WITH SHARON OVER THE HANDLING OF THE SETTLEMENTS ISSUE AND PROBABLY HOPES THE PROPOSAL WILL NEUTRALIZE HIM. WHILE WEIZMAN DOES NOT OPPOSE JEWISH SETTLEMENT ON THE WEST BANK, HE FEELS THAT IT IS HIGH TIME TO STOP SETTING UP SMALL SETTLEMENTS MERELY OUT OF IDEOLOGICAL FERVOR. WEIZMAN IS, IN EFFECT, PROPOSING THAT THE CABINET DO SOMETHING SERIOUS ABOUT SETTLEMENT OR "STOP PLAYING GAMES."

HOW SERIOUS WEIZMAN IS ABOUT THIS PLAN IS AN OPEN QUESTION, FOR HE CERTAINLY RECOGNIZES THAT WHAT HE IS PROPOSING IS SOMETHING THAT CANNOT GO VERY FAR VERY FAST. IN ANY CASE, WEIZMAN'S NEED TO IMPROVE HIS IMAGE IN HERUT AND HOLD HIS OWN AGAINST SHARON ARE PROBABLY MORE SERIOUS CONSIDERATIONS FOR HIM AT THIS TIME THAN THE PREDICTABLE ADVERSE REACTIONS TO THE PROPOSAL FROM WASHINGTON AND CAIRO. THE SUDDEN PRESS EXPOSURE GIVEN THE PLAN MAY INDEED HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH GOI ANGER ABOUT THE ARMS SALE DECISION, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY.

5. IN ANY CASE, I DECIDED NOT RPT NOT TO TAKE UP THIS ISSUE TODAY WITH DAYAN. HE RETURNED ONLY LAST NIGHT FROM DENMARK AND WOULD HAVE BEEN TOTALLY UNINFORMED ABOUT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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ISSUE. NO GOVERNMENT DECISIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN; THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE HERE IS ALREADY VERY RAW; AND THE HIGHEST PRIORITY IS TO PERSUADE THE ISRAELIS TO HELP US GET THE PEACE PROCESS MOVING AGAIN. I RECOMMEND THAT WE LET THIS ALLEGED SETTLEMENT PLAN PASS WITH AS LITTLE U.S. ATTENTION AS POSSIBLE; IN ANY CASE IT IS A VERY LONG WAY FROM ANY CONCRETE REALIZATION. LEWIS

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